



# Supreme Court of Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 3/15/2006

Contact: Craig Waters  
Florida Supreme Court  
(850) 414-7641

## **R. Fred Lewis Named Chief Justice-Elect of Florida**

TALLAHASSEE – The Justices of the Florida Supreme Court this morning unanimously named R. Fred Lewis as Chief Justice-Elect of Florida. He will become the state's 52nd Chief Justice since statehood in a ceremony tentatively scheduled for Friday, June 30.

His term will begin July 1 and at that time he is expected to outline his vision to lead the Court. Until he assumes the responsibilities of the position, he has announced that he will continue to work to advance the priorities of the current Chief Justice

"Justice Lewis has distinguished himself as the 'education Justice'," said current Chief Justice Barbara J. Pariente. "He is well known throughout the state as a frequent guest teacher in schools where he is passionate in his efforts to help children grow in their understanding of the law."

A native of Beckley, West Virginia, Lewis hails from the area rich in coal-mining tradition. He still keeps a jar of raw coal on his desk to remind him of his beginnings, along with New River Coal Company scrip and his grandfather's carbide light.

Lewis in his youth became a star athlete, winning a scholarship to Florida Southern College in Lakeland. There he distinguished himself in studies, athletics, and leadership.

Lewis, 58, went on to graduate from the University of Miami School of Law with honors. After a stint in the U.S. Army, he entered private practice in Miami, specializing in civil trial and appellate litigation. While in Miami he also was very actively involved in issues facing children and the physically challenged.

He left the practice of law upon assuming the office of Justice of the Supreme Court effective January 1, 1999, after being appointed to that post by the late Gov. Lawton Chiles the month before.

Since his appointment, Lewis has worked closely with the Florida Law Related Education Association in sponsoring the Court's annual Justice Teaching Institute, which brings 25 teachers from around Florida to the Court each spring to receive specialized training in teaching about the law.

Lewis routinely travels around Florida to teach in classes from elementary schools to the university level and has been instrumental in developing law-related education programs that involve other judges, lawyers, and Bar organizations.

Throughout his career, Lewis has worked to help persons with disabilities. While in private practice, he provided counseling to families with children who have impairments and provided free legal services to cancer patients seeking proper treatment for multiple conditions.

In the early 1990s, Lewis took on the pro bono case of Denise Montes, who would have died if she did not receive a medical treatment within 60 days that her insurance company had refused to reimburse. Despite damage to his home and office by Hurricane Andrew during this period, Lewis worked out of another attorney's office and quickly persuaded the federal court to rule in favor of Montes, saving her life.

"Satisfaction in the law," said Lewis, "comes not from position or monetary reward but from the good, the right and the justice that the law represents in resolving human problems."

Lewis and his wife Judith met at Florida Southern College and have two children, Elle and Lindsay.

A high-resolution photo of Lewis is available at:

<http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/justices/photos/lewis.jpg>

His Web biography is at:

<http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/justices/lewis.shtml>

###